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Devaluing Life and Education:
The Effect of Naturalism on the Field of Education

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Abstract

The rise of naturalism has affected every area of life. This thesis seeks to address the negative influence of naturalism in various educational settings, exposing the degradation of the secular society while challenging the Christian to pursue change. The United States' participation in eugenics during the early 20th century caused a lack of regard for the lives of special education students. Regular education, specifically the science classroom, has been a target for the naturalistic point of view. Even the abolition of God in the public school setting stems from the rise of naturalism. Lastly, many scientists and professors who hold to a creationist perspective have been persecuted, denied degrees, tenures and jobs based on their opposing viewpoint of science.

Devaluing Life and Education: The Effect of Naturalism on the Field of Education

Naturalism is a philosophy that has turned a balance between human reason, man and nature, into a teeter-totter that has diminished the very existence of God and His creation. Thomas Henderson (2003) points out that naturalism has infiltrated American culture. With the loss of God comes the loss of moral clarity, significance and purpose in life (“Culture Shift, Loss of Value & American Ideals after Darwin” section, para. 3). In order to understand the true influence naturalism has had on the field of education, one must research the origin of naturalism, its most influential contributors, as well as the history and progression of this growing philosophy. Naturalism has influenced every component of education. Understanding the history of naturalism and its effect on the eugenics movement is key to also recognizing this philosophy’s effect on special education, regular education and the professional science world.

Defining Naturalism

Naturalism is a simple term with an early history. According to J. Donald Butler (1968), naturalism finds its roots among the oldest philosophies in the western world. Ancient philosophers such as Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes found no reason to look beyond nature for truth. As the name implies, the philosophy of naturalism suggests an explanation of life based solely on the laws of nature. With the understanding that natural laws are sufficient to explain all phenomena and life, naturalism abandons the need for a higher power, creator, and God.

John Haught (2008) defines naturalism by stating “Only nature, including humans and our creations, is real; that God does not exist; and that science alone can give us complete and reliable knowledge of reality.” Philosophies, like naturalism, develop over

time through the intellectual development of great thinkers and philosophers. James Sire (2004) explains the transition from theism to deism to naturalism:

In intellectual terms the route is this: In theism God is the infinite-personal Creator and sustainer of the cosmos. In deism, God is “reduced”; he begins to lose his personality, though he remains Creator and (by implication) sustainer of the cosmos. In naturalism, God is further “reduced”; he loses His very existence. (p. 59-60)

According to naturalism, there is no god, nor is there a need for one. Philip Johnson (1995) believes that naturalists compare their philosophy to religion in order to avoid serious inspection. Naturalist’s comparison of naturalism to religion negates the need for a god while propagating human reason:

It is said that naturalism is science, whereas theism belongs to religion; naturalism is based on reason, whereas theism is based on faith; and naturalism provides knowledge, whereas theism provides only belief. Science, reason and knowledge easily trump religion, faith and belief (p. 10).

Thomas Shetler (2008) offers a dramatic universal and cultural transformation from utter dependence on a creator to a godless and naturalistic society. Throughout the Middle Ages, theology and philosophy were married. The two were considered inseparable. Shetler explains that people living in the Middle Ages understood that the universe had to have been created by an outside source; “[a]s a result, for the first sixteen hundred years of western civilization, the vast majority of people believed in God and accepted the church’s teachings” (p. 19). People did not have much science; therefore, God was the natural conclusion to a created universe. The more people learned of the

natural world, the less they relied on God and the church's teachings. Though nature ultimately points to a Creator, naturalists began to view nature as a god instead of a creation.

The Renaissance and Reformation brought about a transformation in the thinking and worldview of many. These time periods brought a rediscovery of ancient writings, art, literature and a further study of ancient philosophy. Studying the ancient philosophers brought about a change in paradigm throughout this time period. Shetler points out:

The Renaissance humanists and reformers exposed hypocrisy and corruption in the church; they also began to show that the church had been lying to maintain its political power...The reformers were able to make a distinction between the church and Christianity, and where the church departed from biblical Christianity, they departed from the church. (p. 21)

Because of the deception of the church, people began searching for a "truth," which led to an intellectual revolution.

Scholars during the time of the Scholastic movement began searching for the "limits of reason" (Shetler, p. 22). Scholars such as Peter Abelard and Roger Bacon transformed their thinking from deduction to induction. Deductive thinking "reasons forward from a known truth. For instance, to explain a specific event, deduction starts with an accepted fact and then builds upon that fact in the process of discovering the answer" (Shetler, p. 22). Instead of pursuing knowledge with a previously accepted truth that allowed for further conclusive research, scholars began using inductive reasoning, which finds "induction from a particular fact or discovery to a general conclusion about the nature of reality" (Shetler, p. 22).

Though the Scholastic movement began with the philosophy that the supernatural world exists with or without affirmation, the movement transitioned into one of nominalism, the belief that no one can know beyond the here and now. Nominalism created a definitive separation between faith and reason. This division “elevated individual perception and discernment over institutional doctrine and made reason the sole source of truth in the natural realm” (Shetler, p. 27). This period of time utilized reason to defend faith. The firmness of reason, conversely, changed its purpose from defending faith to creating faith.

While theology and philosophy grew apart, scholars began to conclude their own understanding of the world. With inductive reasoning, many philosophers searched for various elements of truth before piecing reality together. After the Renaissance and Reformation, many philosophers held the position that the world was solely governed by nature. In order to know this truth, scholars and philosophers believed they needed to educate our minds in the guidelines of reason in order to discover truths that exist behind or beyond our world... In pursuit of truth, the carefully trained mind was perceived to be superior to experience or to observation, which were labeled as too imprecise and subjective to be trusted as sources of truth.” (Shetler, p. 23)

These philosophers desired tangible proof and reason over faith. This worldview led to empiricism, the foundation of naturalism. Shetler states “empiricism maintains that only what can be discovered or demonstrated with a physical test can be considered real” (p. 76). Our senses tell us what is real.

James Bissett Pratt, Professor of Philosophy at Williams College in the earlier 20th century and author of *Naturalism* (1939) believed that “Naturalism honestly wants to

know the truth...An earnest and courageous desire to find out and face the truth, no matter what it may be, is indeed, the first characteristic of your genuine upholder of Naturalism” (p. 2-3). Sire understands this philosophy and views the natural world as adequate to explain everyday life, as well as supernatural phenomena, therefore contributing five characteristics to basic naturalism. These five characteristics are as follows: 1) matter is eternal, reigning supreme without a God; 2) the universe operates based on cause and effect; 3) “human beings are complex ‘machines’” (p. 64); 4) personality and uniqueness follow everyone to the grave; and 5) the idea that history is merely a string of events tied together without an ultimate purpose.

The first of the five principles of naturalism, eternal matter, explains that “nothing comes from nothing” (Sire, p. 62). This principle therefore seeks to negate the need for a god. The denial of a higher power assumes the eternity of the cosmos. Carl Sagan (1980), astrophysicist, states that the universe and cosmos are eternal and eternally all that matter; the “Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be” (p. 4). If the natural world is the true reality and God is not made of matter, then God does not exist (Shetler, p. 77). Ultimately, the universe is composed solely of matter, completely unrelated to a higher power or God.

Secondly, Sire explains that the naturalist holds to a closed cosmic system relying on cause and effect. As a closed system, the universe is unable to be “reordered from the outside” (p. 63). Because nature is so complex and organized, order is vital to the stability of the natural world. Pratt explains the cause and effect cosmos this way:

The need to predict and the desire to understand...presuppose that events are ordered. If there were no order among natural events, if there were not regularity

in the relations between them, if sequences among them were never repeated, it would be alike vain to attempt to utilize the natural forces and to understand them.

(p. 47)

If our universe is a closed system, then nothing from without, such as a higher power, can rearrange the structure. The system then, revolving strictly on the laws of nature relies on cause and effect in order to operate properly.

Naturalism's third principle, the idea that human beings are merely complicated "machines" (Sire, p. 64), is not completely understood or agreed upon by naturalists. Many naturalists, according to Sire, point out humans' ability to utilize speech, continue tradition and make moral and ethical decisions. While true, Sire reverts to the idea that the cosmos is composed solely of matter and therefore human beings are merely created from matter. Unlike a machine, human beings experience emotions, have personalities and enjoy hobbies. According to Sire, this experience "is an interrelation of chemical and physical properties we do not yet fully understand" (p. 64). William Barrett (1987) writes,

Man, the microcosm, is just another machine within the universal machine that is the cosmos. We smile at these illustrations as quaint and crude, but secretly we may still nourish the notion that they are after all in the right direction, though a little premature. With the advent of the computer, however, this temptation toward mechanism becomes more irresistible, for here we no longer have an obsolete machine of wheels and pulleys but one that seems able to reproduce the processes of the human mind. (p. 154)

Human beings are subject to the laws of matter. As a part of the naturalistic and solely materialistic universe, however, human beings are diminished to the status of a machine with a process of operation.

Fourthly, naturalism allows for little discussion on the topic of death. According to Sire, death is the annihilation of any existence of personality. Once again, if humans are formed only from matter, no soul or spirit, then the naturalist must conclude that the entire human will cease to exist once death arrives. Bertrand Russell (1957) wrote, “No fire, no heroism, so intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave” (p. 107). If people do not have a soul or spirit, then ultimately, death brings the extinction of a person because there is nothing to live beyond the grave.

Relating the naturalist’s view of death, Shetler says “The primary impact of this in a society where naturalism is the dominant philosophy is a profound collective fear of death and an inordinate emphasis on pleasure and fulfillment now” (p. 208). The belief that there is nothing beyond the grave allows people to pursue euphoria throughout their life.

Lastly, naturalists hold to a natural history and sequential timeline of universal evolution without the action of a Higher Power. While Sire does not claim a specific theory on the formation of the world, he shares that different naturalists believe different theories, such as the Big Bang Theory. Despite different theories, naturalists unite under the common principle of a “self-activating” (p. 68) beginning, agreeing that the universe was not created by any higher power. A self-activating universe seeks to avoid any need for an intelligent designer or God.

If there is no need for God, then there is no universal standard to determine the importance of life. The laws of the universe are then sufficient to both create and destroy. Over the last one-hundred years, humans have taken it upon themselves to practice applied social evolution. According to David DeWitt (2008), early twentieth-century Germany began employing evolutionary based policies. These policies include persuading specific individuals to reproduce as much as possible, as well as the “sterilization of those with genetic defects such as being ‘feebleminded’ or handicapped, blind, alcoholics, etc,” and finally aggressively killing individuals that are “considered to be ‘unfit’ or ‘unworthy of life’” (p. 6). The groups considered as having less than human qualities included Jews, African Americans, Gypsies, Christians, communists, and those who are mentally ill or have mental retardation. As shown in Figure 1, a 1913 issue of the *New York Times* exemplified the eugenic mindset of the time with a distribution of the feebleminded chart:

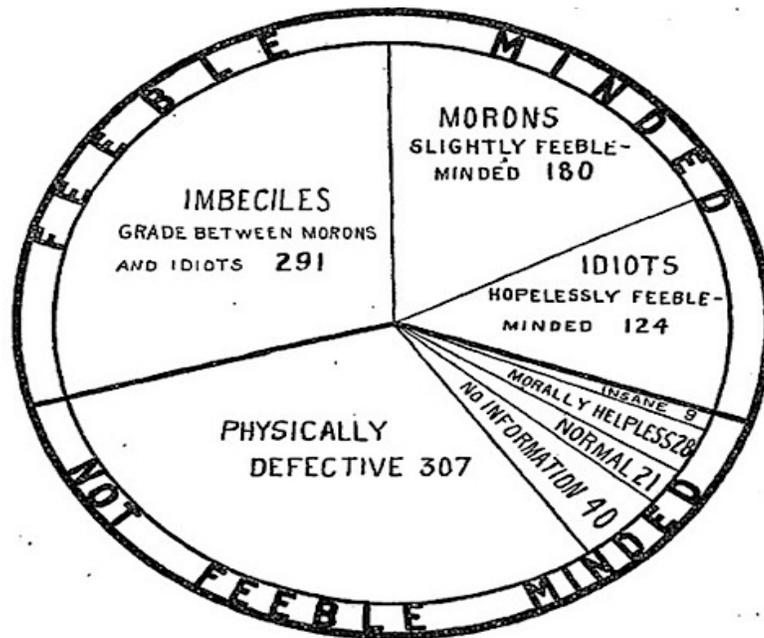


Figure 1 (as cited in Trexler, 2007)

Figure 1 depicts eugenics' lack of regard for human life. The chart divided a population between those with a healthy mental capacity and those cognitive disabilities. The feeble minded are given insulting labels and no hope.

While Germany is better known for practicing applied evolution via the holocaust, eugenics was also carried out in the United States. Over fifty years ago, the Eugenics Movement swept the country. Foster Kennedy in the *American Journal of Psychiatry's* 1942 discussion on the morality of keeping and killing the life of a child with disabilities stated:

I believe when the defective child shall have reached the age of five years - and on the application of his guardians - that the case should be considered under law by a competent medical board; then it should be reviewed twice more at four-month intervals; then, if the board, acting, I repeat, on the applications of the guardians of the child, and after three examinations of a defective who has reached the age of five or more, should decide that that defective has no future or hope of one; then I believe it is a merciful and kindly thing to relieve that defective - often tortured and convulsed, grotesque and absurd, useless and foolish, and entirely undesirable - of the agony of living. (p. 14)

According to this view, when a life is determined to have no meaning or hope, killing a child is better than allowing him or her to suffer through life.

Naturalism directly influenced the Eugenics Movement by diluting the importance of creation and life. If everything in life is created and can be explained by nature, then a defective product, or mistake, may occasionally occur. Foster Kennedy

states: “I am in favor of euthanasia for those hopeless ones who should never have been born-Nature’s mistakes” (p. 14). According to eugenics, the resulting death merely helps the natural process by not allowing a miserable creature to suffer life or to inflict problems on others. According to DeWitt, as a part of the Eugenics Movement, the United States forcefully sterilized more than 40,000 individuals who were considered crazy or mentally unstable in at least 30 states by the year 1944. Margaret Sanger (1920), in her work *Woman and the New Race*, strongly states:

No more children should be born when the parents, though healthy themselves, find that their children are physically or mentally defective. No matter how much they desire children, no man and woman have a right to bring into the world those who are to suffer from mental or physical affliction. It condemns the child to a life of misery and places upon the community the burden of caring for it, probably for its defective descendents for many generations... (p. 89)

In an effort to purify genetics for future generations, men and women were sterilized or forbidden to reproduce.

Eugenics was not merely a product of the times prior to and including the World War II period. The movement has appeared more recently. Peter Singer, Ethicist Professor at Princeton University, has written about and defends the same philosophy. Singer (1979) views infants as animals and believes that the two should receive mutual rights:

The life of a fetus is of no greater value than the life of a nonhuman animal at a similar level of rationality, self-consciousness, awareness, capacity to feel, etc., and that since no fetus is a person no fetus has the same claim to life as a person.

Now it must be admitted that these arguments apply to a newborn baby as much as a fetus. (p.122)

This lack of value for human life continues to confirm the influence of naturalism in the realm of people with disabilities. The idea that “death is the extinction of personality and individuality” (Sire, p. 67) identifies the naturalist’s lack of regard for human life.

Because we are matter and nothing else, life does not exist beyond the grave, and consequently life with no future is worthless and full of agony. Therefore, the parents of the child ought to have the right to order the death of their disabled infant.

Though we may not be aware, our nation is currently approving eugenics. Today, a pregnant woman is informed of her unborn child’s health status prior to birth. Weiss (2009) explains that AFP testing, a neurological screening test, is used for checking for AFP in the mother’s blood. “AFP is a protein secreted by the fetal liver and excreted in the mother's blood. It is generally used for detecting neural tube defects... A low level of AFP could also indicate Down Syndrome.” If the unborn child has a potential disability, the woman then has the option of aborting her defective baby or choosing to live with what many view as a lifetime of condemnation.

Amy Harmon (2007) discusses the more recent rise in prenatal testing. The risk of having a child with Down syndrome typically occurs when the mother is over the age of 35; therefore, prenatal testing was often only given to pregnant women 35 years and older. Yet due to an increase in medical research and prenatal testing, doctors recommend that every pregnant woman receive prenatal testing. According to Shetler, James Watson, molecular biologist, was one of the first people to isolate the DNA molecule. Because Watson does not hold a value for human life beyond functional ability, he feels as though

anyone that is not healthy is a burden on family members and society. Shetler says that Watson “has argued that the severely retarded and the hopelessly insane should be euthanized. He suggests that the DNA of each pregnancy could be analyzed so as to inform us as to which deformed or ‘defective’ children should be aborted” (p. 254). The value of human life is severely diminished.

The Effect of Naturalism and Eugenics on Special Education

Life with a special needs child may never be easy, but the value of that child’s life is no less than any other. Supporters of eugenics devalue the life of anyone who could potentially be a burden on society. Because of the increase in modern eugenics via abortion, the value and purpose of life for those with special needs is diminished. Rick Warren (2002) repudiates this mindset when he says, “You are not an accident. Your birth was no mistake or mishap, and your life is no fluke of nature. Your parents may not have planned you, but God did. He was not at all surprised by your birth. In fact, he expected it” (p. 22). Simply stated, the Lord gives every single individual, disabled or healthy, a purpose to pursue and fulfill. In spite of this, the calling, gifts and talents the Lord has given to a person with special needs frequently go unrealized and uncultivated.

Special education programs offer varying degrees of assistance to students diagnosed with diverse disabilities. The public school systems generally offer three types of special education classrooms. These categories include students with learning disabilities (LD), students who suffer from emotional and behavioral disturbances (EBD), and students with mental retardation (MR). Classically, students with disabilities have been segregated into their respective classroom. Although, according to Polloway, Patton and Serna (2007), in more recent years schools tend to be gravitating to an inclusive

classroom. An inclusive classroom is “a system where students with special needs receive their education in the general education classroom” (p. 3). This system allows students, depending on the severity of the disability, to participate in some general education classes with his or her peers, while still attaining help from an aid throughout the day.

While inclusion is beneficial to certain special education students, some students with more severe disabilities may be confined to a special education classroom and encounter little interaction with their non-disabled peers. More severe still, a few students may be placed in an isolated classroom with only student and teacher. Many special education students experience a combination of the inclusion and special education classrooms. The student will be able to participate in a number of regular education classes and then be pulled into the special education classroom for the rest of the day.

While school is often a place where dreams are realized and encouraged, that is not always the case for the special education student. Because naturalism and eugenics have caused our society to view people with disabilities as inferior, a special education classroom is quite different from a regular education classroom. Special education, like regular education, allows students with disabilities to attain an education alongside their peers. The type, however, differs. While ability, understanding and challenges affect what and how a student with special needs learns, the end goals for each student, practical living skills and the realization of potential, should remain the same. While transition plans are in place, the implementation of the plan often lacks beneficial qualities such as independent living skills. Because of naturalism’s ability to devalue the life of a special needs student, potential is not realized or challenged. Therefore, while special education students are allowed to stay in the public school system until the age of 21, they often

remain learning mental math or English and never learn a real life application for the subject.

Every student must have an equal access to learning. Therefore, beneficial specialized programs exist. Because of the devaluing of human life from naturalism, the attitude toward the programs and their participants is often callous. Special education students are frequently viewed and treated as inferior for participation in individualized programs. These students are generally treated poorly because they are different; naturalism would say they are less than perfect.

In order to help combat naturalism and eugenics in the classroom, special education students need to realize their worth. Potential must be recognized before it can be encouraged. Once encouraged, there is motivation to attempt new challenges and students will begin to rise above the challenges of being treated differently. For example, D.J. is in his early thirties and has suffered from blindness and cognitive disabilities since birth. He has suffered physical and mental abuse at the hands of his own father. When D.J. was still a child, he was adopted by a Christian family. This family treated him with worth and highly encouraged D.J to try new things. Because he was encouraged to reach his potential, D.J. graduated from high school and currently works with a Christian disability ministry. He uses his speaking abilities, testimony, and musical gifts, playing the harmonica and drums, to help share the Gospel with other individuals with various disabilities.

Not every student is mentally or physically able to pursue higher education; still every student is able to better himself in some way. While goals may vary based on

actual ability, a teacher ought to help a person with special needs identify his potential and purpose.

In examining naturalism in students, Butler points out Herbert Spencer's view on the physical aspect of a student. In naturalism,

the child is at least a little animal, whatever else he may be. He has a body, or to be more accurate, he is a body, and one of his first requirements therefore is that he be healthy, a vigorous animal, able to stand the wear and tear of living. (p. 89)

Many special education students suffer from a variety of physical disabilities. Oftentimes they are not strong, let alone vigorous. If naturalism requires a person to be completely healthy and dynamic in order to be a student, then naturalism does not allow room for special education.

Herbert Spencer also believes that "education should, 'produce a citizen who, at the same time that he is well conducted, is also able to make his way in the world'" (as cited in Butler, p. 91). One of Spencer's five educational objectives requires that a student perfect both social and political understanding. While not all special education students will fully be able to attain these goals, they challenge special education programs to teach students to become as independent as possible. Many programs lack the ability, time and resources to teach students how to be self-reliant. A few programs, however, are geared towards training special education students for their future. The devaluing of the life of a person with special needs negates the opportunity that any other student is given. Even though certain skills are required in order to pursue higher education or learn work habits, more often than not, the special education student is not given the chance to attain these skills or realize potential because of a disability. The special education student

needs to be challenged in order to reach full potential. Nevertheless, many teachers and community members are not willing to put extra time and effort into making the appropriate transition of a special needs student a priority. In spite of this, there are a few programs allowing a real transitive progression for special education students.

Heritage High School, E.C. Glass High School, and Central Virginia Community College (CVCC) in Lynchburg, Virginia, have paired up to provide appropriate transition, life and job skills for the special education students between the ages of 18 and 21. These students are still eligible for special education; yet they are older than the students in their high school and desire to be around their peers and a more appropriate age group, in a college setting. For two years, these students are given the opportunity to share hallways, a cafeteria and a college campus with peers while learning various life and job skills. Students that attend CVCC are prepared for job interviews and know how to look for coupons, manage their own money and potentially live on their own. This program works hard to allow students with special needs the opportunity to reach their potential and dreams. Though special education students may have the opportunity to rise above circumstances and accomplish many things, they will likely still be looked down upon as different and incapable because of their disability.

The Effect of Naturalism within General Education

In the realm of regular education, the last 20 years have greatly influenced the science classroom with naturalism. With the acceptance and apparent elitism of Darwinism, the theory of evolution and the Big Bang Theory, students are being spoon-fed naturalism.

While science has always been taught in the classroom, just recently have students been subjected to a strictly naturalistic view of the world. Within the last 20-30 years students have had access only to the worldview that teaches the natural world without mention of anything supernatural. The possibility of a supernatural realm is purposefully left out of science textbooks or treated highly pessimistically and joke-like. Sire offers supporting evidence for the science classroom's naturalistic perspective:

How human beings came to be is generally held to be more certain than how the universe came to be. The theory of evolution, long toyed with by naturalists, was given a "mechanism" by Darwin and has won the day. There is hardly a public school text that does not proclaim the theory as fact. (p. 69)

While science textbooks treat evolution as fact, these books treat the supernatural realm as fiction. Anything miraculous can and will be eventually explained by science. The Prentice Hall Life Science Teacher's Edition (2002) textbook for middle school students discussed Darwin's journey and apparent discovery of evolution. Treating the theory as fact, the textbook states, "Since Darwin published his book, scientists have observed many examples of evolution in action" (p. 154).

Figure 2 is an example of the typical evolutionary series taught in the public school system.

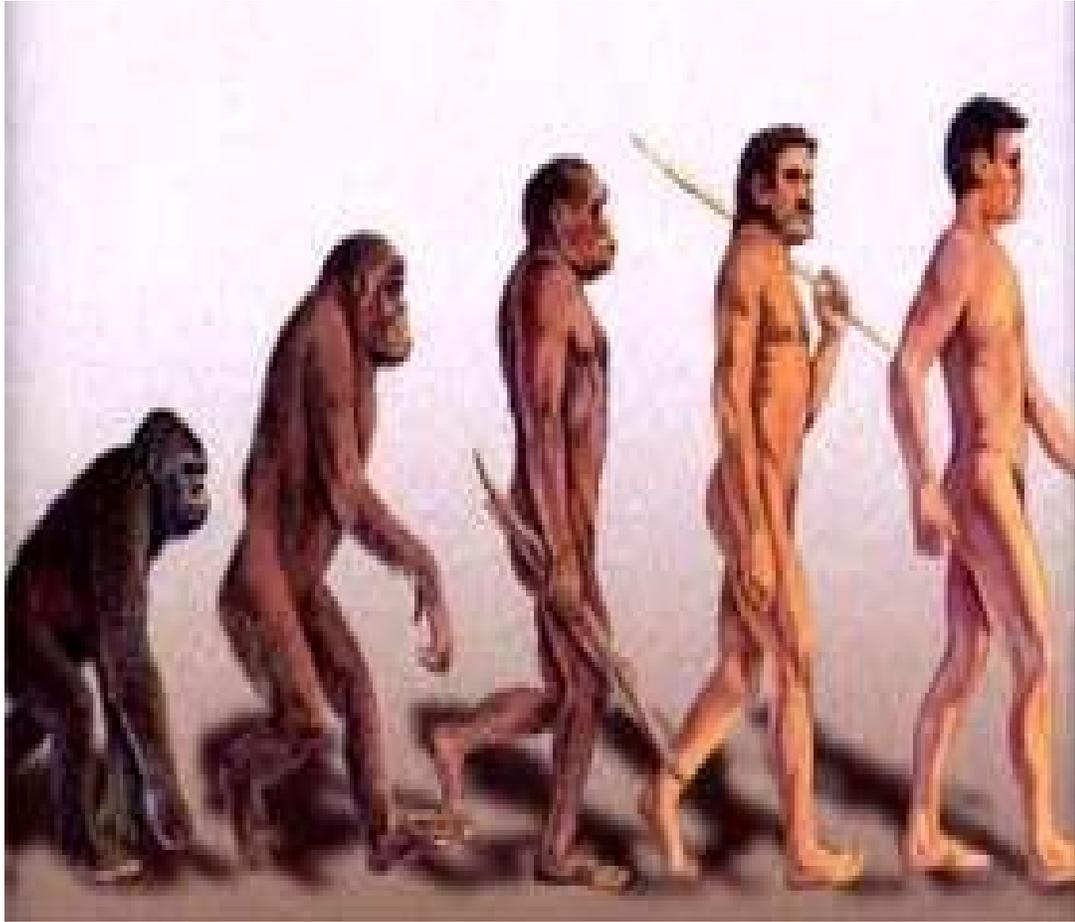


Figure 2 (“Evolution of Man,” n.d.)

An article entitled “Intelligent design: a position statement of National Council for the Social Studies” (2007) discussed “a number of court decisions finding the teaching of creationism and intelligent design in the public school science curriculum to be unconstitutional” (para. 1). According to this article, those arguing against teaching intelligent design are fighting against a religious agenda in the classroom. Calling the concept of intelligent design *doctrine*, this article states that including a creationist

theory, “originally termed ‘creationism,’ then ‘creation science,’ and most recently, ‘intelligent design,’ into public school curricula have been found unconstitutional in state and federal courts” (“Background.” para. 2). These aborted attempts to teach anything other than naturalism, have provided a non-challenged naturalistic science classroom.

Even disregarding all religious aspects, many states will not even acknowledge a slight possibility of an intelligent designer. Even in an overarching description of the state of Wisconsin’s science standards, naturalism is evident. Students are expected to focus on “the origin and evolution of the earth system,” as well as “the origin and evolution of the universe” (Science, Earth and Space, Performance Standards, 2008). According to Dr. Scott Todd in *Nature* (1999), “Even if all the data point to an intelligent designer, such an hypothesis is excluded from science because it is not naturalistic” (p. 423). Because of the blatant philosophical nature of naturalism, Teaching only from a naturalistic point of view should be considered just as unconstitutional as some consider teaching creationism, as a theory, in the public school classroom.

As discussed earlier, the very definition of naturalism denies the need and existence of God. While the classrooms are bombarded with this naturalistic worldview, many schools reject the acceptance of God. The tolerance policies found within the public school systems highly encourage diversity yet view religion, especially Christianity, as a threat. Discussing the contemporary culture, Shetler describes the secular culture as denying any religious terms. He says, “religion is allowed as an individual option, but for issues of import, to the culture as a whole (such as education and public policy), religion is denied any place” (p. 13). An increasing liberal environment that establishes a resistance to conservatism and God constantly surrounds

students. As they seek to make the school systems as equal and diverse as possible, many lawmakers seek to remove God from the Pledge of Allegiance and many more school and legal functions. Though our nation was founded on a belief and dependence on God, so many are quick to dismiss Him. Understanding that many do not believe in God, forced Christianity is not the intent. Yet if pledging allegiance to our nation, one must also pledge allegiance to the foundations of our nation.

Schools have even disallowed students to meet for a Bible study or religious group during free time on school property. During the 2001-2002 school year at Northland Pines High School in Eagle River, Wisconsin, Administration refused to allow students to meet for a weekly Bible study during the assigned resource time. The Bible study had been led by students as well as a local youth pastor. No students were forced to attend and the study was private and had a willing teacher advisor. Nevertheless, school administration felt that a Bible study on school property was inappropriate and should not be allowed due to religious affiliation. An upset parent hired a lawyer who was able to amend decision.

Administrations have previously denied religious clubs in public schools. Philip E. Johnson (1995), author and New York state lawyer, discussed New York law in regards to public school and prayer when he said:

New York state law allows public school districts to make their buildings generally available after school hours for rental to community groups for “social, civic and recreational” uses. A state court held that this broad authorization was not broad enough to include “religious” purposes, and so student Bible clubs and churches were not allowed to rent rooms. (p. 19)

While still not readily accepted, Bible and religious clubs cannot legally be denied access to public school resources. In 2001, a Supreme Court decision was made to allow religious clubs access to public property. According to *Church and State* (2001) “The Supreme Court ruled 6-3 June 11 that public schools may not exclude private religious groups from using classrooms for meetings immediately after the school day ends if those facilities are open to other community groups.” This has allowed many religious clubs into the public school system. Countless other schools continue to completely disallow any community group from using their property in order to shut out religious groups as well.

The Effect of Naturalism on the World of Professional Science

The philosophy of naturalism has become a worldview. Those who hold to the naturalistic point of view have grown to accept less scientific theories and concurrently become exclusive to the naturalistic idea of Darwin’s evolution.

According to Life Science, “A scientific theory is a well-tested concept that explains a wide range of observations” (p. 149). While Darwin’s theory of evolution was tested based on observations, a scientific theory is still a theory. Nonetheless, scientists treat Darwinism and evolution as fact. Johnson explains that the academy of science calls for a separation of faith and science. Churchgoing scientists are asked to lay aside their faith and pick up the torch of naturalism. Therefore, “a biologist may believe in God on Sundays, but he or she had better not bring that belief to the laboratory on Monday with the idea that it has any bearing on the nature or origin of living organisms” (p. 8).

The scientific field of study prides itself on searching for and finding truth through observation and experimentation. Nonetheless, when the science community

treats a theory as fact, it begins to ostracize those who disagree. Somehow, a lack of freedom of speech exists within the professional science world. Scientists failing to profess a belief in evolution have been fired, denied tenure, denied earned degrees and completely ostracized from the science community. Dr. Nathaniel Abraham, biology professor at Liberty University was released from his job at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute in New England due to a lack of belief in evolution. According to the Boston Globe (2007), Dr. Abraham's situation and lawsuit became public in late 2007. Dr. Abraham, originally from India, has a Ph.D. in biology with a specialization in cell and developmental biology. While working at Woods Hole, with a three-year contract, Abraham studied and researched fish development.

Dr. Nathaniel Abraham, who holds to a belief in the literal six-day biblical creation, believes there was "no reason for [him] to be fired" (personal communication interview, January 30, 2009). The topic of evolution was never addressed until after Dr. Abraham began his research at Woods Hole. Dr. Abraham was discussing his project, the development of a specific fish, with his supervisor when the topic was brought into conversation. Feeling the need to inform his supervisor of his belief in creation as well as contribute to the casual conversation, Abraham denied evolution. Abraham continued on his work for the next several weeks before being asked into his supervisor's office. Dr. Abraham thought his supervisor merely wished to discuss more about Abraham's beliefs in creation. Throughout this process, Dr. Abraham's ability to work on the development of fish without a view of evolution was questioned. With little choice, Dr. Abraham was offered an ultimatum, resign or be fired. Wanting to finish his research at Woods Hole Oceanography Institute, Dr. Abraham would not resign and was therefore fired.

Offering a self-defense, Dr. Abraham (personal communication interview) explained the reasons why his belief in creationism would not affect his research. Abraham gave an analogy: a fish is to a human as a motor in a car is to a motor in a motorcycle. Every mode of transportation has a motor. In the same way, both fish and humans have hearts. A fish's heart is similar to a human's, but a human did not develop from a fish just as a motorcycle did not develop from a pickup truck. Therefore, in studying the development of fish embryos, he is able to learn about essential elements to life in general. Alluding to a designer, Dr. Abraham shared that his research pointed to a designer who created different things with the same fundamental parts.

Though he disagrees with many of his colleagues regarding evolution, Dr. Abraham feels that there is a place for the theory:

I am fine with people having that belief as long as they recognize it as a belief. I don't think they should quote it as a fact or push it on others. I believe evolution should be taught in a class of philosophy. (personal communication)

Though he disagrees with the theory of evolution, Dr. Abraham does not reject its place in academia, but restructures its importance.

Conclusion

The naturalistic philosophy is a worldview and a way of life. This philosophy has gradually permeated everyday life and is so engrained into the minds of both students and adults, making it difficult to discern the effect. Naturalism and the Eugenics Movement have greatly influenced the lives of people with special needs and how they are taught. Special education can combat naturalism in the classroom by helping students acknowledge and pursue goals of autonomy and self-reliance. Naturalism has bombarded

the science curriculum and classroom, pushing evolution as fact while diminishing the slightest possibility of creation. This philosophy has also pushed out the name of God in the public school setting, often disallowing Bible studies and prayer. Not only are primary and secondary schools affected, but many institutions of higher learning. Scientists, professors and even editors have been ostracized, persecuted, and lost jobs because of a lack of belief in evolution. This philosophy has become a worldview in both the science and American culture. Naturalism has etched itself so deeply into society and is often difficult to recognize. From a Christian worldview, naturalism's influence is easier to perceive. In a loving and kind way, it is the duty of Christians to protect future generations from being spoon-fed this deception.

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